

The Secret Sauce to Pardot's Support

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I'm Vincent Migliore and this is how we roll at Pardot!

Vincent Migliore is a Technical Support Manager at Pardot, a B2B marketing automation software provider. He loves beer, comedy, and baseball. When he's not making customers' lives 10x easier, he's an Improv actor at the Village Theatre in Atlanta.



We managed to catch up with Vincent and chat about customer support and life at Pardot.

How big is your support team, Vince?

35 and hiring everywhere!

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The Secret Sauce to Customer Support

Atlanta. San Francisco. Dublin. Sydney. And some folks who work remotely in L.A. and Seattle.

Phew! And how many products do you guys support?

My team supports Pardot. We're a Marketing Automation platform.

What channels do you support?

Email, in-app chat, callback phone support. One time, five years ago, someone faxed us.

How many queries do you get each day? An average number will do.

We see about 400 cases get created per day.



Team Pardot at the Salesforce's First Annual Terry Fox Run/Walk

So, how did you end up in customer support?

I desperately needed a change from healthcare consulting. It was a job that lacked humanity. At that time, Pardot was a startup that shared an office with four other startups. A friend of mine was working at one of these other companies and told me that Pardot was hiring. I honestly didn't know what to expect, but the idea of being able to expand my technical skills and help people sounded very intriguing. Four and a half years later, and I'm glad I took the leap. I'm convinced that I wouldn't have learned as much anywhere else during this time.

What does a typical day look like for Vincent Migliore?

My wife goes to work at 6am. I'd like to say I wake up at 5am, cook us both breakfast, and then run 5 miles. The truth is I wake up around 7:30am, and immediately take my dogs out (Boston Terriers) because they'll lick my face to death if I don't do something by that time.

I check my email and the health of our ticket queue to see if there is anything pressing that needs to be addressed.

One of the interesting challenges with managing a support team across multiple countries is that you must fully be prepared to wake up to chaos.

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I'll hop on MARTA (Atlanta's public transit train) and get into the office around 9-9:30. Every day is different, and that's one of the biggest appeals of the job. There isn't anyone under the roof that knows everything, so there is always something to learn and new challenges to overcome.

We're a highly collaborative team and company. I'll be in meetings about the product, the team, our processes, our tools, or our next party. We're always looking to get better (and party harder).

I'm always doing some kind of client outreach. Whether that comes to my attention from CSAT reviews, escalations, or from looking at our metrics.

I don't do much frontline support anymore, so the rest of my time is spent checking in with members of my team, interviewing candidates, defending myself against nerf missiles, or attending one of the many Pardot extracurricular activities. Oh and laughing multiple, hearty, belly laughs all throughout the day. Then 6-6:30pm rolls around and it is back to MARTA for me.

Managing a team of 35 must be tough. How do you motivate yourself (and your team) day in and day out?

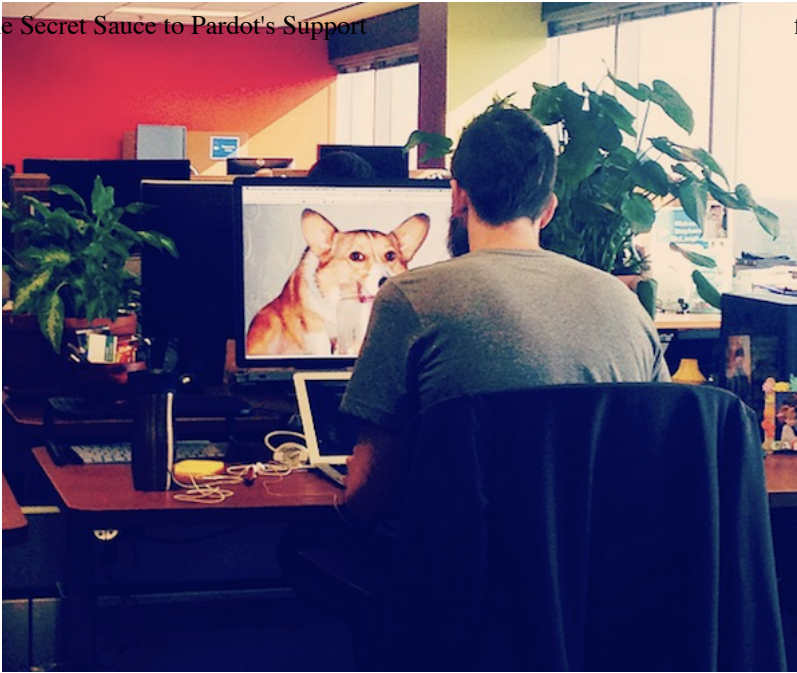
I'm motivated by trying to give people the best job experience possible. It sucks being in a job that you don't like, or feeling like you have no career path. I've been there, and it is a dark place.

I'm motivated by the success of each person.

If everyone on the team is successful, then our clients definitely succeed as well.

If someone hates coming to work, then I've failed.

Everyone on my team is motivated individually by different things, but the one constant that everything else flows from is treating my team like family with lots of respect and love. I think that trust and respect keeps them motivated to do their best because they know I don't micromanage them, and they don't have to worry about me looking over their shoulder. Also food, booze, and praise. In that order.



"Photoshopping the team into photos is a past-time of ours."

We hear you! But how do you manage taking time off from support?

I trust my team, so they make it easy to leave for a while, feeling things will be fine. We have a generous vacation policy, and I'm encouraged to take time off. I keep anything work related off of my personal phone. That allows me to truly disconnect.

What was your toughest day at work?

We've had some less than fun days over the years, but you can handle it when those things happen if you trust your people and your processes. (Always have an "oh no, that didn't just happen" plan. It will save you one day.)

Some perspective though is that we unfortunately had to attend the funeral of one of the founding engineers of the product. He was so young and it was tragic. That day makes any other day easy in comparison. Late emails or software performance issues aren't life and death.

What's the most important metric you think a support rep should aim for?

An individual rep should try to have the highest CSAT score possible. You can close 100 tickets in a day, but if everyone is angry, then why bother?

When clients take the time to write a nice letter, or an upset letter, that means the interaction they had with the agent moved them in some way to let us know how they are feeling.

CSAT gives that qualitative info to us on top of a raw score. The more people you have taking the time to tell you that you did a great job, you have to be doing something right.

How do you measure customer happiness?

We have a client advocate team that does an amazing job of keeping their fingers on the pulse of our customers' needs. We couple findings from their conversations with our CSAT scores, and application usage, to get the full story. If they aren't using the app, they probably aren't happy with it.



"We enjoy taking selfies of people on our team taking selfies of other people taking selfies. We call it Inselfption."

We're gonna throw some situations at you. Tell us how you deal with them over at Pardot.

a) A customer requests a feature that's in the works but it's complicated and you don't have an ETA. What if it's a feature that you don't intend on building ever?

Once a client digs into your app, they are going to want it to do more. We have an ideas exchange where clients can submit and discuss their ideas for new features.

Most of our feature improvements came from our client's struggles or wants.

It is a balance being a part of a large public company (Salesforce) because if we make a promise on something, but fail to deliver, then that can impact the bottom line. So honesty is always the best policy.

Our team stays in touch with the product team and developers to get an understanding of the progress on certain features. We like to tell our clients everything we know, and we never want to hold a carrot out in front of them.

If you aren't going to build something, you need to let interested customers know as soon as you do. Hiding things is how you strain a relationship.

b) A security vulnerability pops up the one weekend you're all on vacation.

We have some systems in place that allow us to call a bat phone or use a bat signal in case of an emergency. Our engineering team is Batman in these scenarios, and I'm probably Jimmy Olsen.

c) Someone tries to blackmail you with said security vulnerability.

The Service Success and Enablement legal team immediately. We're too busy helping file:///Users/brian.steele/Desktop/MBA Backup/Freshdesk article ... clients to mess with that.

d) A customer requests a refund. Do you just issue the refund or do you rope in a sales rep at some point down the funnel to try to woo them back?

It is perfectly reasonable for a customer to ask for a refund when they aren't given something they are paying for. I like to gather as much info as possible about the issue at hand before I recommend it on my end to our finance teams. There definitely is a balance here.

If you give a refund to everyone who asks for one, you won't be in business long. It is more important to understand why they want it, and then go from there.

e) One of your support reps makes a tiny mistake (it's not life and death) but it really frustrates a customer. They're trying to make things right but the customer just seems to be getting more and more frustrated over time. Do you step in and take over or do you let the rep handle it himself?

Everyone makes mistakes, and a client just wants to know they've been heard.

We need to fix the client's issue first, and then we can rebuild their trust.

It is always good to know why it happened and correct it.

Context is so important, and I never jump to conclusions.

Maybe our documentation is outdated and it is an opportunity to prevent that same case from being created again? Or perhaps we just were wrong or having a bad day? Nothing wrong with admitting that, and learning from it.



Team Pardot at a 80s-themed roller skating party

f) A customer asks for a feature that's not on the plan that he's on but he's not willing to upgrade. The customer, however, willing to pay extra for just the feature. How do you deal with these kind of requests?

6 of 10 We have a wonderful upgrades and renewals team that helps our clients when they want to add a feature to their account. Sometimes it isn't always

g) When things get ugly: a frustrated customer not only threatens to leave you but also says he's going to take the conversation public and make none of his clients use your product.

It never reflects well on a company to go public with ugly and hateful speech. If you are in a contract that you want to get out of, going into a lunatic rant on social media isn't going to help your cause.

It is important to be open and honest with your communication, and to keep an even tone during these times. We've found that our clients will go to bat for us when these things happen. For every hateful tweet we get, there are 10 awesome ones backing us up. We are very confident in our ability to help all clients, so we aren't too worried about some negativity on social media.

You can't make everyone happy, but we know we do a good job. (dusts shoulders off)

What's your stance on transparency? Are you pro-transparency (everything from how long we sleep each night to our support interactions should be public) or anti-transparency?

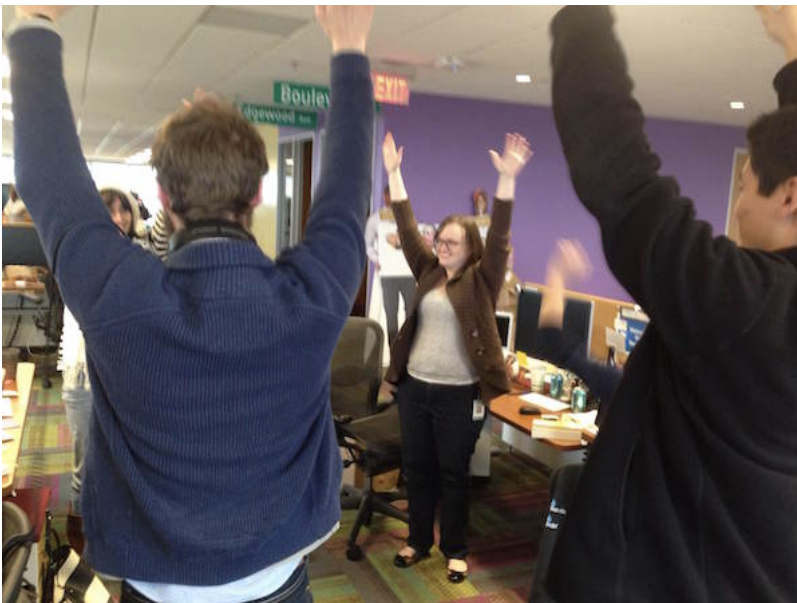
Transparency is great as long as it doesn't cause any confusion. Sometimes you can share too much information, instead of highlighting what is truly important. There are always legal and business implications that have to be considered. All that said, I'm always going to push to put it all out there.

What's the biggest surprise you received as a support agent?

A handwritten note is never expected and always feels great.

You always know if someone appreciated what you did if they take the time to not only write you, but buy a stamp too!

Also, sometimes people send me beer. I like those people.



Pardot looks for positive, supportive, and self-starting people. Those three traits are crucial to being successful here. I don't necessarily care what background you have. We have people from all backgrounds. Photography, graphic design, math, religion, etc. I think anyone can pick up the technical side of things if they put solid effort into it. However, you can't teach a good attitude.

If you aren't friendly and easy to talk to, then your career growth will be pretty slow.

I like people who are comfortable with who they are and can be themselves.

In terms of customer service, which company do you admire a lot?

Wistia kills it. I want to be friends with all of them just from watching their videos. That kind of human connection through a screen is an amazing accomplishment.

Name another rep you're a big fan of, and would like to hear from.

Melanie Crissey at Rigor is someone I'm a huge fan of. We worked together at Pardot, and now she runs the customer experience at Rigor. She will go to the end of the earth to look for a solution for a client, and then drop the mic with a sweet .gif.

Just one more question, Vincent. What would you do in the event of a zombie apocalypse?

I'd like to think that I'd be able to outsmart a dead body, but the most likely scenario is that I'd run for less than a mile until my lungs sadly gave out, and then I'd get eaten by a bunch of zombies.

Every week, we attempt to find out what makes our favourite customer service reps tick, in the [Secret Sauce series \(http://blog.freshdesk.com/topics/the-secret-sauce-to-customer-support/\)](http://blog.freshdesk.com/topics/the-secret-sauce-to-customer-support/). We find out what a typical day is like for these support rockstars, their personal work-philosophy, support process and what inspires them to go above and beyond the call of duty to make their customers happy. Know a customer support rep you'd like to see featured here? Drop us a line in the comments or shoot an email to love@freshdesk.com with your suggestions.

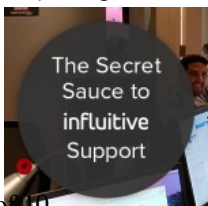
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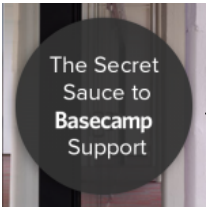
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